

# CTC NEWSLETTER

Career Transition Center  
George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center  
U.S. Department of State

## JUNE 2005



**Happy  
Father's  
Day!**

*"Dad taught me everything I know. Unfortunately, he didn't teach me everything he knows."*

*- Al Unser, Jr.*



**CTC INTERNET  
WEBSITE**  
[www.state.gov/m/psi/tc](http://www.state.gov/m/psi/tc)

## IDENTIFYING KEY WORDS FOR YOUR RESUME & COVER LETTER

*- Prepared by the CTC Staff*

More and more employers are requiring job seekers to submit online their cover letters, resumes, and other documents required for an application. The employer places or receives these documents in a recruiting database or applicant tracking system. There is a big market now for recruitment management software which employers of all sizes can use to sort through job applications. Most of this software is designed to search through a resume database for "key" words.

The recruiter or the hiring manager will determine the key words for each specific job. Certain key words can be classified as mandatory and others as desirable. Some software can produce a list of applicants ranked by the number of key word "hits" or the greatest key word "density" found in each application and other more ad-



*"Words are the soul's ambassadors, who go Abroad upon her errands to and fro."*

*- James Howe in  
Of Words*

vanced software can even weigh the importance of each key word to the job criteria.

### Identifying the Key Words

Key words are words that are commonly used in your profession or industry now. The majority of key words are nouns or

noun phrases that relate to professional skills and experience. They may pertain to "hard" or "soft" skills.

Key words for hard skills are usually very precise and job specific. These are the key words with more weight. They may refer to technical expertise, typical industry services, job titles, and proper names of products. They may also relate to educational courses, degrees, and institutions as well as professional affiliations, certifications, and licenses. They could even include geographical sites or regions and -- believe it or not! --

zip codes and telephone area codes. You can find a list of key words for hard skills in a few professions on the University of California Riverside Career Center website ([www.careers.ucr.edu/Students/JobSearch/nouns.html](http://www.careers.ucr.edu/Students/JobSearch/nouns.html)). Example: the qualifications on the job advertisement include experience working with compensation and benefits. You took Compensation and Benefits 101 in college, but have no practical experience in it. The course name alone may score you a hit and put you in the running for the job.

Key words for soft skills often pertain to transferable skills, skills that are applicable in many professions and industries. These are the less weighty key words. They include interpersonal, communication, plan, organization, design, innovation, and listening. You can find a list of soft skill nouns and adjectives at [AssureConsulting.com](http://AssureConsulting.com) ([www.assureconsulting.com/resources/keywords.shtml](http://www.assureconsulting.com/resources/keywords.shtml)).

Use current jargon and key words only if you understand fully what they mean and they apply to your experience. Be sure to avoid outdated jargon -- like "personnel" instead of "human resources."

Make the job advertisement for the position you are targeting the center of your search. Compare all other key word research to the words in that advertisement.

Try to find other ads for similar positions with similar job titles. Read all these advertisements carefully and you may begin to see the same words repeated. Those could be the key words.

Other ways to identify key words include:

- Peruse the employer's website, including the annual report and mission statement
- Look up the profession and the job title in The Occupational Outlook Handbook and the Dictionary of Occupational Titles ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)).
- Network with others in your field (in person and online) and keep your ears open for professional jargon and the latest buzzwords

Keep your reading up-to-date on professional and general business publications

- Conduct information interviews
- Ask HR professionals and recruiters

There are also books and websites specifically devoted to key words, such as:

- 1500+ Keywords for \$100,000+ Jobs, by Wendy S. Enelow
- Peterson's The Job Hunter's Word Finder, by James Bluemond
- Words to Get Hired By: The Job-seeker's Quintessential Lexicon of Powerful Words and Phrases for Resumes and Cover Letters, published by Quintessential Careers Press
- Babylon.com ([www.babylon.com](http://www.babylon.com)) has glossaries for specific industries
- Web Access Employment Network ([www.waen.org](http://www.waen.org)) offers connections to many other web resources on the subject of key words

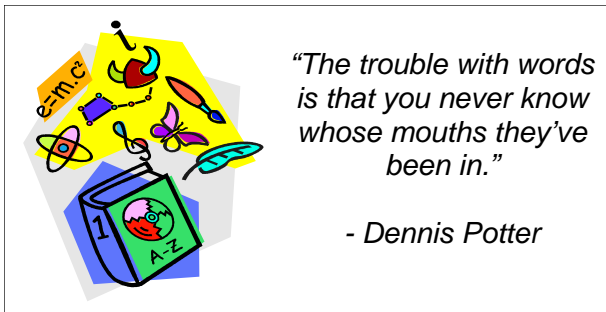
Many career counselors recommend that, although you may find the same key words in many advertisements in your field, you should still perform the key word search exercise for each job you apply for and tailor the key words in your resume for each



*"Words ... present a picture of the inward man."*

*- John Raleigh Mott  
(1865-1955,  
U.S. evangelist)*

specific job application.



### Using the Key Words

Assume that your cover letter and resume are to be scanned by the employer for key words and use the key words in both.

You won't get more points for repeating the same key word, so use synonyms. Example: design, plan, and proposal. You can also use various forms of a key word. Example: manager and management. Commonly used acronyms can increase the number of key words as well. Avoid using keywords for jobs you don't want or duties you don't want to perform.

Our Government job titles are frequently different from private sector titles -- General Services Officer, for instance. So, be sure to include key words in your explanation of what your duties were and what your reporting (supervisory) relationships were in a job. Use the language of the prospective employer to describe your government work if that language fits.

Try to be as specific as possible in detailing your qualifications for the targeted job. Instead of stating that you are fluent in several African languages, list all of the languages. Instead of stating that you have practical experience in spreadsheet software, list the software programs (e.g., Excel). Make sure to tie the key words to your accomplishments and include key words in your accomplishment statements.

You may want to include more of your professional and educational history than you would in a traditional resume. As a result, resumes that are going to be scanned for key words are often longer than a traditional resume that you would hand to a private sector recruiter at a job fair. The more key words included, the better your chance of your resume emerging from the database. But, remember, the resume will (hopefully!) end up in the hands of the company's recruiter, a real human being. You have to strike a balance between detail and readability. Let's say that the computer has spit out the 12 resumes with the most hits for a specific job. The recruiter only wants to interview three candidates for the job. He will read quickly through the stack of resumes and pull out the three who look like the best candidates to him. If your resume is four pages long and includes too many details to make it an interesting read, then he probably won't select it for the interviews.

Some applicants now include a key word section in their resume with a summary list of the key words. This section is sometimes "front-loaded" at the beginning of the resume, but can also be placed at the end of the resume like a laundry list. One possible title for that section would be "Key Word Summary."

A more accepted technique is to incorporate a lot of key words in a resume section called the "Profile" or "Professional Profile" or "Summary of Qualifications." That section is usually placed directly below your name and address on the first page of the resume and provides the reader with a snapshot of you as a professional. A variation on this style is to include a list of skills and qualifications (i.e., key words) just below the profile. Here is an example:

Financial Analysis  
Trade Issues  
Technical Assistance

Financial Markets  
Commercial banking  
Tax issues

Key words should appear in the actual text of your resume, too – you must substantiate your claims!

If all or part of your resume is designed in the functional (as opposed to chronological) style, you can use key words as the functional headers (e.g., Management, Training, Marketing). Then, under each function, you list accomplishments that illustrate your incredible skill in that functional area and use more key words.

After you have done your key word research, check your resume by highlighting all the words in it that would probably be considered key words. Compare the highlighted words to the key words in the job advertisement and to the key words you have found in your other research. Have you included the most important ones in your resume (and cover letter, if it's going to be scanned, too)? Could you include more?

Making sure that your resume features the right key words is only one aspect of preparing your resume. The resume is only one aspect of your job search strategy. Don't forget that networking is The Most Important Aspect of your strategy. So, tighten up that resume and take it on the road. Remember the CTC Mantra: NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!!



*"Words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more lively ideas than the sight of things themselves."*

*- Joseph Addison*

## Practice Exercise One

Identify the 10 most important key words in the following job advertisement.

World Wildlife Fund  
Manager, Multilateral Agency Relations

Job Type: Limited Term  
Location: Washington, DC

Job Description: World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the global conservation organization leading international efforts for a living planet, seeks a Manager for Multilateral Relations. The candidate will oversee and manage relations with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to identify, promote, and implement strategic policy and program initiatives, including funding opportunities. Requirements: Interested candidate should possess a Master's degree and familiarity with the GEF and one or more of its implementing agencies. Ten years experience in international conservation and sustainable development required. Five or more years experience in proposals management preferred.

*"How often misused words generate misleading thoughts."*

*- Herbert Spencer*



## Practice Exercise Two

Identify the 10 most important key words in the following job advertisement.

Sixth Star Entertainment & Marketing  
Destination Speakers

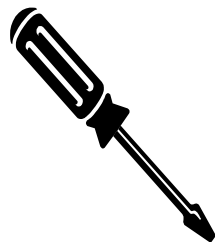
A Destination Speaker's responsibility is to give a series of original presentations illustrating the culture and history of the ports of call on a given cruise itinerary. For instance, a Speaker on a cruise to Mexico may discuss the Mexican-American War,

foreign policy between the United States and Mexico, or the culture of the country. The talks should not be a reiteration of what to see-and-do in Puerto Vallarta. Rather, they should provide the guests with insight into the ports that one would not be able to find in an average guidebook.

Destination Speakers that are placed by Sixth Star are offered the luxuries of a fine voyage in a passenger stateroom with full passenger privileges in exchange for their services and a small administrative fee of \$50 per day for each day of the cruise. The lecturer is welcome to bring a guest to sail in the same cabin free of charge. Please note that the daily administrative fee for Silversea Cruises and Radisson Seven Seas Cruises is \$100 per day due to the all inclusive nature of these ultra-luxurious voyages (gratuities included, etc.).

During a typical week at sea, Speakers traditionally deliver three to four 35-minute presentations, with 10 minutes at the end for questions and answers. Presentations should be very entertaining (or as we like to say, "edu-tainment"), and we highly encourage the use of professional presentation tools, including slides and Power Point presentations.

The Destination Speaker must be an excellent and experienced public speaker as typical audience size ranges from 50-300 passengers for each talk. However, good news travels fast aboard ships and excellent Speakers have been known to pack the house!



*"Using words to describe magic is like using a screwdriver to cut roast beef."*

*- Tom Robbins*

## Answers to Practice Exercises

See page 8



*"Work and play are words used to describe the same thing under different conditions."*

*- Mark Twain*

## EDITOR'S NOTES

### Execunet

How do headhunters and recruiters find executive level candidates? ExecuNet's annual survey, the *2005 Executive Job Market Intelligence Report* showed the following:



"Despite the allure and functionality of the Internet, executive search professionals still rely heavily on research and networking to identify candidates for a position according to the ExecuNet 13th annual survey of search professionals. In fact, 56 percent of candidates are initially identified through networking, recruiters report in the survey.

"Of course, executives should not rule out the Internet entirely. Recruiters do use online job postings to some degree: 15 percent of candidates are initially identified through postings on online job sites, up from 11 percent in 2003. When they do post jobs, recruiters prefer niche sites like ExecuNet over general job sites: 38 percent say they always or frequently post positions on niche job sites, while only 21 percent say they always or frequently post jobs on general job sites." Here's how the pie chart was divided:

Networking	63%
Internet job postings	18%
Posting resume in online database	7%
Research on industries, companies,	

and positions	4%
Responding to newspaper ads	3%
Resume broadcasts to employers	2%
Other	3%

The most sought-after skills these head-hunters and recruiters listed were:

- Industry-specific experience
- Leadership skills
- Functional/technical expertise
- Strong communication skills
- Management and development of staff

The executive recruiters polled reported that an executive search usually takes at least 3 to 4 months.

### BusinessWeek

Subscribers to BusinessWeek ([www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com)) can take advantage of their free online courses that include:

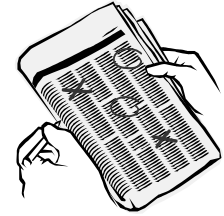
- Start-Up Basics for the First-Time Entrepreneur
- The Wireless Mobile Office
- Raising Capital for Your Small Business
- Setting Up a Wireless Home Network
- Writing a High-Impact Business Plan
- Designing and Equipping Your Home Office
- Time Management
- How to Do Everything with Windows XP Home Networking
- Home Networking Demystified



*"There's a great power in words, if you don't hitch too many of them together."*

- Josh Billings

## JOB LEADS



### AARP Board of Directors

AARP is recruiting 7 volunteers to serve on its Board of Directors. You can learn more about the positions on their website: [www.aarp.org/board](http://www.aarp.org/board) or you can contact the AARP Office of Board Support at this address:

AARP  
Office of Board Support  
Room A10-610  
601 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
Telephone: 202-434-2440

Applications are due by July 30, 2005.



*"My father taught me to work, but he did not teach me to love it."*

- Abraham Lincoln

### FSJ Editorial Board

"Active-duty and retired Foreign Service employees (both generalists and specialists) from all foreign affairs agencies are invited to nominate themselves or colleagues for a two-year term on the Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board beginning in September. Because of normal turnover and moves abroad, the Board seeks to fill several vacancies this year.

"Editorial Board members, who are appointed by the AFSA Governing Board, set the general editorial direction of the Journal, in consultation with the editorial staff. Meeting monthly at AFSA HQ (over a free lunch!), they evaluate submitted manu-

scripts, decide on future focus topics, and weigh in on other matters affecting the FSJ's style, substance and process.

"Please note that board members must reside in the Washington area and be able to attend monthly midday meetings at AFSA throughout their tenure on the board. They should also be able to devote several hours a month to reading articles and considering other Journal-related matters.

"If interested, please get in touch by June 1 (sooner if possible) with FSJ editor Steve Honley (e-mail: [honley@afsa.org](mailto:honley@afsa.org)), sending some information about yourself (or the colleague you are nominating) and explaining why you are interested in serving on the Board. "



*"My father taught me that the only way you can make good at anything is to practice, and then practice some more."*

- Pete Rose

### The "Post 200"

Be sure to check out *The Washington Post's* April 25, 2005 publication "Post 200." It's a very good study of the DC metro area market and it provides you with some financial details on local companies. ([www.washingtonpost.com/post200](http://www.washingtonpost.com/post200))

Not only does "Post 200" offer great lists of top area businesses that are succeeding and hiring, it also gives the website for each company that has one. That will help you log on easily and check the company's job board. Add your target company websites to your "Favorites" and check their job ads every month. If you've posted a resume on their website, update the re-

sume periodically to move it back onto their front burner.

Happy Job Hunting!

*"My father always told me,  
'Find a job you love and  
you'll never have to work a  
day in your life.'"*

- Jim Fox



## ATTENTION JSP GRADS!

### Next CTC Job Fair

The next CTC job fair will be held on August 23, 2005 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm in the Field House at the Shultz Center (aka FSI).



### Have you served in Afghanistan?

(From the AFSA website—[www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org))

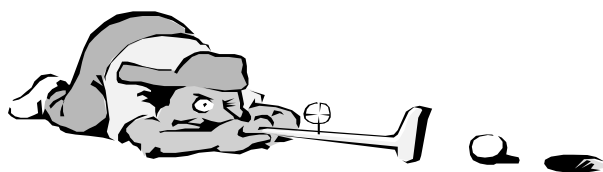
"The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST), at the request of the U.S. Institute for Peace, is interviewing personnel who have served in Afghanistan on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), or who otherwise have experience with the teams. The goal of the current project is to glean lessons learned from U.S. Government personnel (civilian and military) and others, such as foreign officials and NGO representatives.

"If you would consider being interviewed, or if you know someone who would be a good candidate for an interview, please contact ADST Executive Director Jack Zetkulis at 703-302-6991

or jzetkulic@adst.org."

*"Everybody knows that fatherhood reveals your limitations. But less well known is that, now and then, fatherhood also brings out skills that might well have gone undiscovered were it not for having kids."*

*- Hugh O'Neill*



*"My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me."*

*- Jim Valvano,  
American College Basketball Coach*

### **Practice Exercise One—Answers**

1. Manager—manage—management
2. Global Environment Facility—GEF
3. Proposals
4. Program initiatives
5. Funding opportunities
6. Sustainable development
7. Strategic policy
8. Multilateral—international
9. Conservation—wildlife
10. Agencies

### **Practice Exercise Two—Answers**

1. Speaker—speak
2. Lecturer-lecture
3. Presentation—present
4. Entertainment—entertain
5. Culture—cultural
6. History
7. Politics
8. Foreign—International
9. Audience—public
10. Guide



## **CTC NEWSLETTER**

*FSI/TC/CTC*

*U.S. Department of State*

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